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ABSTRACT

A study examined the impact of self-confrontation (self-viewing of videotaped speeches) on student public speaking apprehension. Subjects, 112 undergraduate students enrolled in introductory public speaking classes who were confronted with their videotaped speeches (as post-performance feedback), did not experience a reduction in their public speaking apprehension, while 56 undergraduate subjects not so confronted did experience a significant reduction. Findings suggest that the experience of presenting several speeches before an audience appears to be the intervening variable that invoked the reduction in public speaking apprehension, while self-confrontation appears to inhibit this reduction. (Contains 12 references.) (Author/RS)

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Abstract

Self-confrontation and Public Speaking Apprehension: To Videotape or Not Videotape Student Speakers?

This study examines the impact of self-confrontation (self-viewing of videotaped speeches) on student public speaking apprehension. Subjects confronted with their videotaped speeches (as post-performance feedback) did not experience a reduction in their public speaking apprehension, while subjects not so confronted did experience a significant reduction. The experience of presenting several speeches before an audience appears to be the intervening variable that invoked the reduction in public speaking apprehension, while self-confrontation appears to inhibit this reduction.

The number of universities selecting the public speaking orientation for introductory communication course (ICC) instruction has been reported to be increasing (Gibson, Hanna, Lechty, 1990). Gibson et al. indicated that 56% of 423 universities surveyed chose the public speaking option and that the "hybrid" orientation to basic course instruction (a combination of orientations [e.g., public speaking, interpersonal, communication theory, etc.]) appears to have been decreasing over the last five years that data were collected. The increased emphasis on public speaking instruction "challenges the classroom instructor to discover and implement strategies that minimize anxiety associated with in-class public speaking performances" (Beatty, 1988, p. 208; see also, Newburger and Hemphill, 1992).

"For most people, giving a speech is a novel experience, not something they do every day" (McCroskey, 1984, p. 25). The experience of presenting a speech *to be graded* would seemingly intensify the exceptional nature of the already novel public speaking communication event (Newburger and Hemphill, 1992). Gibson et al. (1990) indicated that 41% of the schools they surveyed used videotape in some capacity in ICC classrooms. Considering the tangible presence of videotape in ICC classrooms, it seems useful to examine the potential impact that self-confrontation (self-viewing of videotaped speeches as post-performance feedback) might have as an instructional intervention intended to reduce student public speaking apprehension.

Previous research has produced mixed results with self-confrontation having been found to be both *positively* and *negatively* reinforcing (Gelso, 1974; Roberts, 1972; Dieker, Crane, and Brown, 1971; and McCroskey and Lashbrook, 1970). Indirectly related research examining the impact of videotaped feedback on student *gains in interviewing skill* "suggested that significant gains are made when videotaped feedback is combined with other strategies such as practice interviews, discussions, models, lectures, and behavior modification" (Sorenson and Pickett, 1986, p.13). This study examines

whether the use of self-confrontation as an instructional intervention in introductory public speaking classes will result in a reduction of subects' public speaking apprehension levels.

Hypothesis: Subjects' public speaking apprehension levels will be reduced as a result of experiencing self-confrontation as a part of the public speaking instructional process.

METHOD

Data were collected from two samples using a repeated measures design. In one sample 112 undergraduates enrolled in introductory public speaking classes completed the Personal Report of Public Speaking Apprehension (PRPSA) (McCroskey, 1970; McCroskey and Richmond, 1982) at two different intervals. The PRPSA is a Likert-type self-report instrument which measures public speaking anxiety exclusively. The first completion of the instrument preceded any in-class public speaking activities, while the second completion of the instrument came after each subject delivered four in-class public speeches.

The other sample involved 56 undergraduates also enrolled in introductory public speaking classes. The first completion of the PRPSA preceded any in-class public speaking activities, while the second completion of the instrument came after each subject delivered four in-class public speeches that were videotaped. Each subject was confronted with the video playback of each of his/her four public speaking performances following each speech presentation.

RESULTS

Data Analyses

A 2x2 ANOVA was computed and revealed that the main effect of all subjects as differentiated by pre and posttests was significant ($F = 12.84$, $df = 1,167$, $p<.000$). No other significant differences were found. [A 2x2 ANCOVA was additionally computed, measuring the difference between subjects involved with self-confrontation and subjects not involved with self-confrontation on posttest PRPSA scores, arithmetically adjusting for the pretest scores. No significant difference was found.] A layered post hoc analysis using the Newman-Keuls procedure indicated a significant difference for pre to posttest scores for only the subjects not involved with self-confrontation (4.3 w/critical value = 4.17, $p<.01$). The difference involved a reduction in these subjects' public speaking apprehension levels (PRPSA means from pre to posttest = 78.6 to 74.3). No other significant differences were found using the Newman-Keuls procedure. The average reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) for the PRPSA was .910.

A stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was computed to determine the relationship between demographic variables (sex, age, educational classification [freshman, sophomore, etc.], grade expectation [reported by subjects on both pre and posttests and later coded as constant, increased or decreased expectation], teacher evaluation [each subject responded to the same posttest teacher evaluation item--"Overall, this teacher is among the best teachers I have known"--by selecting one of five response choices ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"], and section) and "PRPSA change" [difference between subjects' pre and posttest scores]. The results of the regression analysis indicated that the proportion of the criterion variance that was accounted for by the demographics (predictor variables) was small ($R = .0987$ or 10%--all variables entered).

DISCUSSION

The results indicated that subjects' public speaking apprehension levels were susceptible to change in the introductory public speaking instructional context. The use of self-confrontation as a public speaking apprehension reduction strategy did not prove useful, however. The significant F value, and, even more importantly, the Newman-Keuls critical value reported in this study indicated that the repeated experience of presenting public speeches may have served as an intervening variable that invoked the change, while self-confrontation appeared to inhibit the reduction of communication apprehension (not the hypothesized outcome!). Recent related research regarding the use of video-modeling as an instructional intervention for reducing student *pre-performance* public speaking anxiety produced similar results (Newburger and Hemphill, 1992). Newburger and Hemphill concluded that "the narrower range of acceptable behavior produced by the provision of both audio and visual sensory input may have heightened subjects' concerns about evaluation, performance, and self-related issues" (p. 77; see also--Daly, Vangelisti, Neel, and Cavanaugh, 1989). Certainly, the provision of both audio and visual sensory input associated with subjects' own speech presentations can potentially significantly heighten the subjects' self-related concerns.

Future research might consider the methodology employed for integrating self-confrontation in the public speaking instructional environment. In this study, after a group of speakers presented their assigned speeches both the speakers and their classmates viewed the video replays of their speech performances and a discussion concerning the presentations (lead by the class instructor) followed. In the control group the only difference in the use of class time was the absence of the self-confrontation dimension. Alternative approaches for employing the self-confrontation strategy (e.g., allowing speech

presenters to privately view their performances outside of class) may produce different results.

An issue raised by Newburger and Hemphill (1992) is also relevant for this investigation. They stressed that "future research should consider whether student speech performances qualitatively improve as an outcome of being confronted to the video-modeling instructional strategy (or, in the case of this study, we can similarly wonder about the use of self-confrontation), despite the possibility that their anxiety levels may noy be correspondingly reduced. The belief that nervousness can actually be used to the advantage of speech presenters is widely held" (p. 78). This issue is indirectly supported by Sorenson and Pickett's (1986) finding that significant *gains in interviewing skill* "are made when videotaped feedback is combined with other strategies such as practice interviews, discussions, models, lectures, and behavior modification" (p.13).

The alternative view held by some instructors of the introductory public speaking course, that a major objective of the course should be to instill a greater measure of confidence in students concerning their future public speaking activities, is also worthy of some consideration. Many students enrolled in an introductory public speaking course are fulfilling an undergraduate academic requirement and it may be the only such course they will ever take. Should they leave the course as more competent communicators that are relieved to "never again have to give a speech?" One could argue the case that public speaking anxiety reduction could be as important as corresponding skill development. "At this point, the findings suggest only that basic course instructors wishing to use videotape for the primary purpose of reducing their students' speech anxiety should consider that the use of this instructional intervention for that specific purpose has, at best, produced mixed results" (Newburger and Hemphill, 1992, p.78).

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